



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CORPS RELEASES DRAFT EVERGLADES RESTORATION RULES FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Washington, DC. - Today, the Bush Administration took an important step toward the comprehensive restoration of the Everglades ecosystem with the release of the proposed programmatic regulations for the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). The proposed regulations will establish the framework for the detailed planning and implementation of the \$8 billion CERP, which will be jointly funded by the Federal government and the State of Florida. The regulations also assist in defining the relationships and responsibilities of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and federal, state, local and tribal partners in the restoration effort. Publication later this week in the Federal Register will begin the official 60-day period for public comment.

"The Corps is committed to ensuring that the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan will accomplish its restoration goals while providing for the other water related needs of the area," said Under Secretary of the Army Les Brownlee. "These regulations include strong assurances for ecological restoration, including a process for the development of interim hydrologic and ecological goals. I'm also pleased with their strong emphasis on science, including the RECOVER advisory body and independent scientific review, as well as the process for adaptive management."

"This formidable task of drafting these regulations has been accomplished through the strong cooperative efforts of Federal agencies, especially the Department of the Interior, the Miccosukee and Seminole tribes, and state agencies, and our cost-sharing partner, the South Florida Water Management District, all of whom have contributed greatly to this effort," said Mr. Brownlee.

"We are pleased with the proposed programmatic regulations," said Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton. "The proposed rule addresses concerns the Department has raised and it will provide an important framework for achieving restoration of the Everglades. Moreover, the proposed rule provides a strong role for the

Department and we look forward to working in partnership with the Corps and the State of Florida."

The details of the proposed regulations also benefited substantially from a collaborative process that began in December 2001 to informally discuss an early draft of the regulations. The proposed regulations released today reflect changes made in response to many ideas and comments from the tribes and a large number of individuals and organizations representing environmental, agricultural, utility, and other interests.

The Corps will publish the proposed regulations in the Federal Register later this week and begin a 60-day period for public comment prior to being finalized. The Corps will hold several public meetings in various locations in south Florida during the next two months. All public comments will become a part of the administrative record.

The Water Resources Development Act of 2000 requires the Secretary of the Army, after notice and opportunity for public comment, to publish regulations to ensure that the goals and purposes of CERP are achieved. The proposed Programmatic Regulations were submitted to the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review prior to publication in the Federal Register. The final regulations require concurrence of the State of Florida and the Department of the Interior, both of which have been closely involved in the development of the regulations to ensure that they meet their needs.

The proposed regulations are available at the Everglades website at <http://www.evergladesplan.org> and, after publication, at the Federal Register website at http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces/aces140.html

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For further information, please call the Public Affairs Office of the Jacksonville District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at 904-232-2236. See the attached [fact sheet](#) for more information on what the proposed regulation will accomplish.